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Strawberry Shortcake™

# Spring for Strawberry Shortcake

By Monique Z. Stephens
Illustrated by Josie Yee and Ken Edwards

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It was a special day in Strawberryland—planting day! Strawberry Shortcake had been looking forward to this day for weeks.

"Today we're going to plant strawberry seeds," Strawberry explained to her little sister, Apple Dumplin'. "And all of our friends are coming over to help!"

Strawberry Shortcake gathered everything they would need for planting the strawberry patch—shovels, trowels, a watering can, and, of course, lots and lots of berry seeds.

There was a knock at the door. Strawberry smiled when she saw her friends Angel Cake, Huckleberry Pie, Orange Blossom, Ginger Snap, and Honey Pie Pony standing outside.

"Hi, Strawberry!" said Huck. "Are you ready to plant?"

Strawberry Shortcake shivered as an icy gust of wind blew through the doorway. Even the icicles hanging from the roof seemed to shiver! "*Brr!*" she exclaimed. "It's still berry cold, but we can get a head start on our planting if we work together!"

"Let's work in pairs," Strawberry suggested. "Huck and Custard can dig rows in the berry patch. Honey and Orange can scatter seeds in the rows. Angel and Ginger can water the seeds. And Apple and I will cover them back up!"

Pupcake barked.

Strawberry Shortcake laughed. "Don't worry, Pupcake, I didn't forget you. You can . . . supervise!"

She turned to her friends. "All right, everybody," said Strawberry. "Let's get started!"

Huck tried to put his shovel into the ground.

"Uh-oh!" said Huck. "I don't think we're going to do much planting today. The ground is too frozen to dig up!"

"Let me try," said Ginger Snap helpfully, picking up a shovel. But Ginger couldn't turn the soil either.

"That's strange," said Strawberry. "We always plant the berry seeds by now!"

"Spring must be late this year," Angel Cake said.

Strawberry Shortcake frowned. "I think you're right. But if spring is late, our planting will be late, and then we'll have fewer berries in the summer! We've got to find spring. Who wants to come with me?"

"I will!" Orange Blossom said quickly.

"So will I," volunteered Ginger Snap.

"And Angel Cake, Huckleberry, and I can stay here with Apple Dumplin', Custard, and Pupcake," Honey Pie Pony offered.

"That way, if spring arrives while you're gone, we can get right to work—so we don't lose any planting time!" added Angel Cake.

Strawberry Shortcake smiled gratefully. "Thanks, guys. Hopefully, we'll be back soon—and bring warmer weather with us!"

Waving good-bye, Strawberry, Orange, and Ginger set off to find spring.

The friends searched all of Strawberryland, looking for signs of spring. Suddenly, something caught Strawberry Shortcake's eye.

"Look! A daffodil!" she exclaimed. "It's a clue!"

"What do you mean?" asked Orange.

"Daffodils only bloom in springtime, so spring can't be too far away," Strawberry explained. "Look, there's another one! I bet spring is almost here!"

"That's a relief," said Ginger. "If spring doesn't come soon, Cookie Corners will run out of ingredients before summer!"

"Why would Cookie Corners run out of ingredients?" asked Strawberry, confused.

"Spring brings warm weather to grow fresh grain. The hens need grain to eat, so they can lay eggs," Ginger said. "And spring's warm sunshine makes the grass grow. Cows eat the grass to make milk and butter.

"And every spring, the farmers plant wheat and sugarcane, which give us flour and sugar," Ginger continued. "I need all of these things—eggs, milk, butter, flour, and sugar—to make cookies!"

"Spring is just as important in Orange Blossom Acres," said Orange. "Without spring, the bees and butterflies can't help the plants and flowers grow. That means that nothing will bloom in Orange Blossom Acres. And that means no fruit!"

"So it's a good thing spring is nearby," said Strawberry, pointing to a butterfly's cocoon.

"Right," said Orange. "But where is it?"

The girls continued their search through Huckleberry Briar to the frozen River Fudge. As they walked carefully along the icy bank, they met a frail-looking old man.

"Hello, sir," said Strawberry. "I'm Strawberry Shortcake, and these are my friends, Orange Blossom and Ginger Snap. Do you need any help?"

The old man smiled wearily. "I'm Old Man Winter. Thank you, but I'm fine. Just tired."

Strawberry, Orange, and Ginger nodded sympathetically.

"We understand," said Strawberry Shortcake. "We're a little tired, too. We've been searching all over for spring. It should be here by now!"

"Yes," Old Man Winter agreed. "She *is* very late."

"*She?*" said Orange Blossom. "Spring is a *girl*?"

Old Man Winter nodded. "Yes, and she's not much older than you. She brings warm breezes, bright sunshine, and gentle showers to all the lands.

"But I don't think she wants to do her job this year. I've finished my work, but I can't go home until Spring comes," Old Man Winter said with a sigh.

"That's not fair!" said Strawberry Shortcake.

"No, it isn't," Old Man Winter replied sadly.

"Do you know where we can find her?" asked Ginger Snap.

"Go to the Land of Seasons," said Old Man Winter. "I expect she'll be there."

Strawberry, Orange, and Ginger thanked him and went on their way.

Strawberry Shortcake and her friends walked a long time before they finally arrived at the Land of Seasons. There, they found a little girl playing in the snow.

"Come play!" she called to them. "Come make snow angels with me!"

The girl looked like she was having so much fun that Strawberry, Orange, and Ginger couldn't resist joining her! The four girls laughed as they jumped and played in the snow.

Finally Strawberry stood up. "I wish we could keep playing, but we have an important job to do," she explained to the girl.

"But we're having so much fun!" the little girl complained.

"We've got to look for Spring," said Strawberry Shortcake. "If Spring doesn't come, I can't grow my beautiful berries."

"And I can't bake my yummy-licious cookies," said Ginger Snap.

"And I won't have any fruit to make the world's juiciest juice!" Orange Blossom added.

"Don't forget Old Man Winter," Strawberry reminded her friends. "He can't even go home!"

The little girl looked at the ground. "I didn't know Spring was so important," she said in a soft voice.

"Important?" Strawberry exclaimed. "Everyone's counting on her!"

Slowly, the girl took off her scarf and mittens. "Maybe I can help," she said. "You see . . . I'm Spring."

The girls stared at her with their mouths open. "*You're* Spring?" they said together.

Spring nodded. "That's right. And I think we'd better get going. I have a job to do!"

Strawberry, Orange, and Ginger ran after Spring as she danced from place to place, bringing springtime to all the different lands with her special wand.

Like magic, the sun shone more brightly, the wind blew more gently, and the hard ground thawed. Bare trees sprouted leaves, flowers bloomed, and butterflies emerged from their cocoons.

Spring had arrived!

When they reached Strawberry's house in Strawberryland, Honey, Huck, and Angel had already started planting.

"Thanks for working so berry hard, everybody," Strawberry Shortcake said. Then she turned to her new friend. "Spring, you're wonderful!" she said. "We're so glad you came back!"

"Thank you," said Spring. "And thank you for reminding me how important it is to do my part when there's work to be done!"

"Speaking of work—there's lots of planting to do. So we'd better get busy!" said Strawberry Shortcake.

"We can even make it a planting party," said Orange Blossom. "I brought juice!"

"And I brought cookies!" Ginger said.

"Good idea," said Strawberry Shortcake. "After all, work can be fun . . ."

" . . . when we all do our part!" Spring finished with a big smile as she picked up a shovel.

Strawberry Shortcake laughed happily. "And soon we'll have the berry best strawberry crop ever!"

Strawberry Shortcake wants to plant her berry special strawberries, but it seems like winter will *never* end! So Strawberry goes on a search for spring. Will she find spring in time to grow the best strawberry patch ever?

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